

As part of the West Virginia University Board of Governor's Rule 2.2 Program Review process, the WVU Provost's Office required that a single Program Review Self-Study Form be completed on behalf of all identified programs in the department or unit. This Program Review Self-Study Form was to be submitted to the Provost's Office by end of day on August 1, 2023. The Provost's Office reviewed the submitted Program Review Self-Study Forms in early August.

Self-Study content is unvetted by the Provost's Office. As such, the WVU Provost's Office cannot attest to the accuracy of any data, analyses, or statements provided within. Also, redactions were made where warranted for the protection of individual identities around sensitive information.

Q1.1.
BOG Program Review Self-Study Form

This is the self-study form that will be completed in support of the summer 2023 academic transformation program portfolio review.

Only one program review self-study is to be submitted per unit; all of the unit's *programs* will be covered by one self-study.

Q1.2. Select the appropriate academic unit under review.

College	College of Law ▼
Department or School	College of Law ▼

Q1.3. List all of the unit's programs.

Example:

BA Biology
BS Biology
MS Biology
PhD Biology

Q1.4. Name and Email of the person completing the self-study

Name	Amelia Smith Rinehart
Email Address	amelia.rinehart@mail.wvu.edu

Q1.5. How were faculty given the opportunity to contribute to, review and provide feedback on this self-study?

The Dean and Associate Deans had individual conversations with as many of the full-time faculty as possible to provide an overview of the academic program portfolio review process; answer questions; and listen to reactions, concerns, and suggestions. As work on the self-study began, some faculty members offered specific suggestions orally or in writing about points to emphasize in the self-study. The College of Law (COL) administration circulated a completed draft of the self-study on July 24 – more than a week before the August 1 due date – and faculty were encouraged to submit written comments on the draft to the COL administration directly and via the online Faculty Comment form. Finally, the COL administration held a Zoom meeting of the faculty on July 26 to provide an opportunity for collective discussion of the draft and to hear additional comments and suggestions not made in writing. We took all these comments into account in the submitted version of the self-study.

Q2.1. Explain how the unit and its programs contributes to WVU's [mission](#).

This response is limited to 7500 characters, approximately 2 single spaced pages.

The COL contributes to the mission of WVU in four broad ways: 1) affordable legal education for underrepresented student populations; 2) a pipeline of lawyers to serve an underserved state; 3) nationally-regarded clinical and public interest programs; and 4) high-impact research that influences policymakers, judges, lawyers, and the scholarly community. 1) As the state's only law school, COL is a gateway to the legal profession for students from underrepresented populations in and outside of the state. We are frequently named a "best value" or "most affordable" law school by preLaw Magazine and National Jurist. We are very committed to recruiting, retaining, and supporting first-gen students, diverse students, and veterans. Over 60% of our students are WV residents, and 10-15% received their undergraduate degree from a WV college or university. COL fosters an inclusive and diverse educational environment so that our graduates reflect these values when providing legal services and work to engage and transform their communities. 2) Roughly 70% of graduates serve the state. Our graduates become federal and state court judges, government attorneys, legislators, prosecutors, public defenders, small and solo practitioners, general counsel, members of firms representing all sectors of business and industry, and business innovators and leaders themselves. Lawyers are leaders. Through our program of legal education, which is uniquely positioned to provide practical and experiential learning opportunities that meet the needs of the state, our graduates are well-positioned to lead transformation and community engagement efforts at all levels of state and local government, in the judicial system, and in business and industry. 3) The COL's clinical and public interest programs support WVU's land-grant mission by providing access to legal services for the underserved and addressing the state's most pressing policy problems. The demand for public service and public interest lawyers in the state continues to grow due to the many challenges facing WV, including the opioid epidemic and related issues like the child abuse and neglect crisis. These crises hit hardest in rural communities where legal services can be hard to find. According to 2022 ABA data, WV has a shortfall of lawyers compared to national averages, at 2.6 lawyers per thousand residents in WV versus 4 on average nationally. Moreover, these difficult societal challenges are putting increasing pressure on state/local government, legal services organizations, state agencies, and the judicial system. Our clinics and public interest programs support and partner with the residents and entities most impacted by these significant challenges. In educating and training our students, COL instills and advances the value of public service across the curriculum, in and out of the classroom, through: experiential learning opportunities such as law clinics providing legal services to low-income and vulnerable populations; full and part-time externships placing students in a wide variety of nonprofits, the judiciary, the legislature, and state/federal agencies; summer job placements and fellowships at state agencies and legal services organizations to assist the growing demand for low-cost legal assistance; and unique centers and student organizations like the Center for Law and Public Service and Public Interest Advocates that support and promote these opportunities for students and graduates. In summer 2023 alone, 15 PIA summer fellows placed in 6 organizations dedicated 5,000+ hours of service and representation to 750 families across the state. The full-time post graduate PIA fellow is estimated to serve 200 low-income clients with legal representation. Most recently, COL has partnered with the Supreme Court of Appeals of WV to create an externship to provide students with practical training in abuse and neglect proceedings. The externship program helps to address the massive shortage of lawyers to represent families and children in these matters. Overall, our students provide nearly 40,000 hours of free legal services and community service annually. COL is frequently named a top public interest law school in the nation in publications like prelaw Magazine, which ranked us 5th in the nation for public interest law and named us a "best law school for practical training" in 2020. Our clinical law program's service to the state is perhaps the clearest evidence of COL's commitment to WVU's land-grant mission. Our Land Use and Sustainable Development Clinic improves the quality of life in WV through land use planning, land conservation, education, and increasing access to broadband. It has served 51 of 55 counties and 90 local government entities to support local community leaders in responding to flood recovery, the opioid crisis, and COVID-19. In its efforts to improve water quality and wastewater treatment facilities, this clinic partners regularly with other units on campus including Public Health, Engineering, Agriculture, and Extension. The faculty, staff, and students in this clinic alone devote an average of 27,000 hours per year engaging with communities and providing legal assistance to the state. Our Veteran's Advocacy Clinic expands legal services to the more than 167,000 veterans across West Virginia, many with acute and unique legal needs related to their military service or return to civilian life. Our Child and Family Advocacy Clinic with its Medical-Legal Partnership is providing legal representation to our most vulnerable communities. Partnering with WVU Medicine/Children's Hospital, the WVU Cancer Institute and Drug Courts in the state, this Clinic provides legal services to children and families of limited income to promote their health, security, and future success. Our clinical law program has also partnered with WVU Health Affairs on a State Opioid Response grant to provide reentry-related legal services to West Virginians recovering from substance use disorders. This partnership primarily focuses on establishing economic stability through legal assistance related to bankruptcy, benefits eligibility, driver's license reinstatement, and expungements. These are only a few examples of the impact and contribution of our clinical law program to WVU's mission. 4) Finally, our faculty are also engaged in impactful areas of research and scholarship related to law and policy. Many of the challenges facing WV lie at the intersection of policy and health law, education law, criminal law, and environmental law. We have nationally leading scholars and teachers in these fields, and more. Our talented legal scholars challenge and inspire our students, our institutions, and the profession to rise to the incredible challenges of our times by addressing these and other important topics in law and policy and proposing solutions. Our faculty are regularly called upon to offer expert guidance to litigators, authoring amicus briefs to the Supreme Court and state and federal appeals courts. We testify before state and federal legislators, and author white papers and research that informs public policy. We influence academic debates through publications in top-ranked peer-reviewed and law review journals and academic presses. Our faculty regularly offer expert and timely advice to national and regional news outlets.

Q3.1.
Resources, Revenue, and Expenses

The purpose of this section is to ensure the accessibility and adequacy of the unit's infrastructure and resources and its financial viability.

Responses in this section are limited to 7500 characters or approximately 2 single spaced pages.

Q3.2. Has the unit experienced significant issues with any of the following during the past five years?

By "significant," we mean issues that interfere with either the unit's ability to deliver its programs to its students or the students' ability to complete those programs in a timely manner.

	Yes	No
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Ability to schedule required classrooms	☐	☒
Access to adequate technological infrastructure	☐	☒
Access to adequate technological support	☐	☒
Access to adequate physical infrastructure (labs, performance spaces, etc.)	☐	☒

Q3.3. Describe the issues the program has faced in the area(s) identified above.

This question was not displayed to the respondent.

Q3.4. Data have been provided on the unit's last three years of tuition revenue, expenses, and net revenue. Address any negative net revenue or any significant changes (positive or negative) to unit's net position.

Revenue by department is the actual tuition revenue, net of any discounting, paid by students taking courses in course subject codes affiliated with the department.

Expense by department is the actual unrestricted, operating expenditures by department within the functions of instruction and academic support.

Net revenue is the revenue minus the expense.

Our negative net revenue is driven by unfunded financial aid, including tuition waivers. This response addresses how we got there, how we are addressing it, and other expense and revenue commentary. Financial Aid and Admissions After the 2008 recession, law schools faced the lowest number of national applicants since the 70s. A smaller applicant pool forced schools to a difficult choice – maintain enrollment levels and sacrifice selectivity or preserve or increase selectivity by reducing enrollment. Many schools chose to reduce enrollment, and still had to increase law school scholarship spending to recruit and yield matriculants. At the same time, debt transparency advocacy encouraged applicants to increasingly rely on awards to make decisions. Thus, law school scholarship spending across the nation increased dramatically. Notably, the average of all R1 public Land-Grant law school financial aid expenditures in 2020-21 was about \$10MM (an increase from about \$5.7MM in 2014-15). Our 2020-21 spend was about \$4.2MM total, including about \$1M in waivers, \$1.8MM in COL-funded awards, and \$1.4MM in private awards. Pre-recession, COL reduced first-year enrollment to 135 to increase selectivity and quality. When the recession reduced applicant levels even further, we sought an optimal level of enrollment to meet our quality goals from that lower enrollment base (as did most other public law schools). We began increasing aid spending in about 2008 (along with a Provost-approved plan for enrollment reduction) and continued to do so through the recession and beyond to yield matriculants at the same levels of quality and quantity. Our approach was not data-driven, inefficiently allocated private funds, and relied heavily upon waivers. We secured enrollment goals but didn't improve incoming quality. Given increased reliance on COL- and University-funded awards, in Fall 2021, COL began implementing a 3-part plan to sustainably and responsibly reduce reliance on contrarevenue without losing selectivity and quality in our student body. 1) We are 2 years into using data analysis and creative strategies to maximize the effectiveness of every award toward a long-term goal of a stable enrollment of 115-120 first year students per year coupled with recruiting incoming transfers and exchange students to offset outgoing transfers and academic attrition. 2) For FY24+, we plan to work with the Foundation on a fundraising campaign targeted toward raising private unrestricted funds. 3) Finally, we plan to explore and develop, as warranted, additional revenue sources beyond tuition from our J.D. program. We are already making gains in reducing unfunded spending with even or better enrollment and quality. In Fall 2021, we hired a new Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management focused on data-driven recruiting and yielding of resident and non-resident students. That year's recruiting resulted in our 2022-23 first year class having our highest median LSAT and GPA in at least 15 years, higher selectivity by attracting significantly more applications, and increased diversity from 7%, the lowest of all accredited law schools, to 12% – all in one cycle. Our enrollment for that class was 103, down from 117. Total financial aid was higher by 33%, but we spent 35% less on COL-funded aid and 34% more on private aid. We enrolled 4 DuBois Fellows, 3 of whom were non-residents, resulting in very high contrarevenue in total waivers. (Importantly, these decisions were made before we learned about the new budgeting model.) With 1 year of data, in FY24, we likely we will enroll 108 first year students and add 2 transfers and 1 exchange student. Class diversity will be about 16%, our median LSAT will remain at 155, and we project total scholarship spend to be 23% lower from last year, with flat Foundation spending, about \$440,000 less waiver spending, and only \$100,000 more in College-funded spending to counter that lower spending. Notably, we increased full-pay students to 1/3 of the class (our average tuition-paid per student will move up from \$13,884 in FY23 to about \$19,804 in FY24). Based on this data, we can increase enrollment and reduce reliance on COL and University support at the same time through efficient awarding, fundraising, and revenue generation. Alongside financial efficiency, we added the GRE as a testing alternative; next we will pilot JD Next, a new test meant to reduce racial disparities compared to the LSAT. Additional options for testing will expand our applicant pool in a number of areas, including non-traditional, first generation, and students from underrepresented groups. Our 3+3 program is another way to enroll talented students who receive reduced scholarship support or pay full tuition. We began our program in 2015, but recent increases in the time and energy invested have improved the numbers in that cohort. These students require more support for their faster track to professional school, but we have a proof of concept with 7 students who successfully completed their first year in 2023. These programs will grow nationally due to Gen Z students seeking faster and cheaper paths to a JD. We will refine and grow our program not just at WVU but at other WV universities so that the state retains its best undergraduate talent while we increase enrollment and tuition revenue. New Revenue In addition to more efficient aid strategies, we will target fundraising of unrestricted funds to close the gap between unfunded and funded scholarships. We also will expand our offerings beyond the JD. We are considering a potential acquisition or sharing of the Master of Legal Studies program with Eberly. This curriculum is not as regulated by the ABA and could help increase student credit hours and tuition revenue without consequence to the JD program. We are exploring a part-time 4-year program for students who have jobs elsewhere in the state and want to complete a degree while remaining in residence elsewhere. Finally, certificates and sponsored legal training in the community (for employees of state and local agencies, non-profits, and the like) could be successful mechanisms for revenue generation that are relatively low cost and not tied to accreditation requirements. Reduced Expenses Our expenses have decreased as enrollment moved lower. We have done this intentionally over the past few years. We reduced personnel costs by not filling positions, including both faculty and staff. We have 3 faculty currently in phased retirements – one finishing in May 2024, the other 2 in May 2025. We replaced core subject matter instruction losses with entry-level or relatively junior faculty with lower compensation. We also reduced departmental budgets across the COL – academics, student support, library, enrollment management, clinics, and operations. Reducing expenses year over year, we haven't changed the quality of instruction and student support. We added just one new position in 2022, a behavioral health counselor who meets our students' needs for wraparound support, a growing need since the pandemic. In sum, we plan to meaningfully reduce our dependence on unfunded aid to compete with our peers, to generate revenue both through existing JD and new non-JD programs as well as aggressive fundraising, and to regularly reassess and adjust our expenses to achieve the most student support possible within our

Q4.1.

Faculty Composition and Productivity

Responses should be concise but also specific and supported by evidence. Responses in this section are limited to 7500 characters or approximately 2 single spaced pages.

Specific data definitions for these metrics are available on the [Academic Transformation](#) webpage.

Q4.2. Data have been provided on the unit's faculty full-time equivalency (FTE) to the median of all majors for fall 18 to fall 22.

Address any differences in the unit's student to FTE ratio and the institution's student-to-faculty ratio of 18-to-1 per IPEDS reporting for academic year 2021-2022.

The J.D degree program, because the COL is a professional school, does not fit neatly into the standard student/faculty ratios of either undergraduate or doctoral programs. It is distinct and best analyzed by comparison to other peer law schools. ABA-accredited law schools report student/faculty ratios using a formula distinct from IPEDS. The ABA formula equals total enrollment divided by (full-time faculty + 1/3 part-time faculty). Using this formula and 2021-22 data, our student/faculty ratio for the academic year 2021-22 was 8.2. Other peer law schools of similar enrollment, resources, and reputation had a median student/faculty ratio of 7.5 during that same period. This places us slightly above the median. Any marked increase of student/faculty ratio at the College of Law could threaten our ability to recruit students and faculty and offer a well-regarded, accredited program. Law schools have always sought to lower, rather than raise, their student/faculty ratios. This is advisable for many reasons: - Prospective students, peers, and accreditors and ranking organizations all view smaller student/faculty ratios as markers of high quality because they offer greater opportunity for meaningful student engagement. - Law schools also regularly report average class-size of first year and upper-level courses, with smaller sizes being a factor used by students to choose their law school. - ABA accreditation standards demand that "substantially all" of the first-year curriculum be taught by full-time faculty only. As the only law school serving this state and one with a land grant mission, we must maintain a body of faculty with expertise in the diverse variety of subject-matters that cover the spectrum of licensure and practice demands of the state, including the fourteen distinct topics in law tested on the bar examination that must be covered well. Clinic teaching demands small sections, in the interest of pedagogy and service to live clients. As law schools pushed their ratios lower, the COL has experienced a contraction of faculty from retirements and attrition. From 2020-23, we saw a net decline of 3 faculty members, 2 of whom were tenure-track or tenured. Declines were even greater in the decade prior to this review period, as the COL peaked at 42 full-time faculty members in the middle 2010s and has since declined to 26 FTE for Fall 2023. Despite this, we have been modest in rehiring to right-size the faculty to align with declines in law student enrollment after the recession. See Qs 3.4 and 5.2. Our enrollment was 323 in 2015-16, roughly the same as the median fall enrollment for 2018-21. Our SF ratio has risen every year since 2017-18, from 6.2 to 8.2 for 2021-22. We project another increase for 2023-24 to almost 9, given our cuts of adjuncts and 26 faculty FTE. Requiring a S/F ratio of 18:1 on the IPEDS scale would put us far outside law school norms. We also anticipate that COL faculty will organically shrink over the next few years without any mandatory reductions: - We currently have 3 faculty in phased retirement agreements, with 1 ending in AY 24 and 2 in AY 25. - We have 5 tenured faculty of retirement age, one of whom is on a long-term leave of absence. - Many mid-career and junior faculty (and critical staff) are currently exploring other job options in response to the Academic Transformation Process. For example, a tenure-track, diverse faculty member extremely important to the future of our clinical programs left for another faculty position out-of-state. Our development officer also resigned this summer. More may follow. Given the difficulty we are already experiencing in recruiting and retaining faculty and professional staff, we are concerned that further reductions will damage the long-term viability of the COL. Facing likely attrition and retirements without a certain ability to fill open positions, the COL is undertaking efforts to more efficiently use faculty resources on a variety of fronts, including workload policy, curricular reform, and careful consideration of course rotations. Efforts are underway to move faculty who are less research-oriented into a 3:2 teaching rotation. We are examining our curriculum by determining what courses we must offer to for accreditation and licensure requirements, what courses are important but not absolutely essential, and what courses we can give up if we must. We are using enrollment data to ensure lower enrollment courses are rotated with other to improve enrollment and to ensure that courses required for graduation or for particular needed skills are enrolled at appropriate levels for quality and cost of instruction. Law schools require a breadth of curriculum, including intentionally low enrollment intensive writing and experiential courses. Therefore, even as we utilize faculty more efficiently, we cannot escape offering some low enrollment courses. Having the faculty to offer a rich and comprehensive curriculum is essential to our being an accredited and respected law school and for our students to successfully achieve their career goals, especially when we are the only law school in a state trying to diversify its workforce and economy.

Q4.3. This question is optional and required only if a unit's doctoral programs are under review.

Data have been provided on the unit's tenure-track / tenured FTE to doctoral student headcount ratio across all of the unit's doctoral programs.

Address any differences in the unit's doctoral student to tenure-track and tenured faculty FTE ratio to the institutional expectation of 2-to-1.

N/A. We are not a doctoral program.

Q4.4. Data have been provided that show the changes to the unit's total number of faculty over the review period. Data have also been provided that show the total student headcount enrolled in all of the unit's programs over the same period of time as well as a three-year trend in student credit hour (SCH) production.

Explain the relationship between the change in the number of faculty in the unit and the change in the units total headcount enrollment and SCH production trends.

At the COL, practically all student credit hours come from law students and the vast majority of law students take only law classes (they cannot take more than 4 of 91 required credit hours in another program). Dual degree students and the occasional non-law graduate student taking a law class are the rare exceptions. Further, every law student (except a handful of dual degree students) must amass a minimum of 91 law credits to graduate. For these reasons, law school enrollment directly drives student credit hour trends and the latter need not be addressed separately. Enrollment is discussed more extensively in Q 5.2 and faculty trends more extensively in Q 4.2. For purposes of this question, whether we focus on the short-term (2020-23) or the longer term (2016-23), faculty size has decreased significantly in response to declining enrollment. (Compare a full-time faculty of 42 at the time of our last ABA Accreditation visit in 2016 to the current 26 full time faculty FTE for Fall 2023.) More specifically, faculty size has decreased markedly over the last 7 years in response to lower enrollments and budgetary constraints because we chose not to replace most of the faculty who have retired or departed. Looking at the shorter term, total enrollment from Fall 2018 to Fall 2020 was essentially flat at around 325. We admitted a larger class of 117 students in Fall 2021 and had an increased total enrollment of 333. In Fall 2022, enrollment dropped to 316 for two reasons: (1) we intentionally admitted a smaller first year class of 103 to increase our selectivity; and (2) we academically dismissed more first year students than had been typical after Spring 2022 pursuant to raised academic standards related to improving bar passage outcomes (which are critical to accreditation and reputation). These were policy choices, not responses to lesser demand to attend the COL – indeed, we received a much higher number of applications for the 2022-23 academic year than we had received in several years. Along with decreased enrollment to current levels, we decreased faculty size over the last three years by not rehiring 1:1 for faculty departures. As we already discussed in Q. 3.4, law school applications across the nation dropped after the recession. The drop did not impact all schools on the same timeline. For COL, dramatic change arrived with the admissions cycle for the class that entered in Fall 2013. Applications fell from 984 to 621 during that cycle. With the University's consent and support, the COL accepted smaller class sizes to preserve or increase the quality of its entering class. We have had entering classes that ranged from the low 100s to the high 110s since that time. In 2015-16, three years into the “new normal” for law school admissions, overall college enrollment was down to the mid 320’s, and it has ranged between a low of 302 in Fall 2016 to a high of 333 in Fall 2021 since that time. The faculty reached a peak size of 42 full-time faculty in Fall 2015. As a result, the College has mostly declined to replace departing or retiring faculty ever since. We believe that our enrollment goals, student credit hour production, and overall success with recruiting students and faculty, accreditation reviews, and peer reputation support 26 FTE for enrollment in the JD program between 315-330, a group which includes clinicians, writing specialists, and doctrinal faculty across many subject areas in the law.

Q4.5. Data have been provided that shows the unit's research expenditures per the Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD).

Does this data capture all of the unit's research expenditures? If not, explain the difference here and provide evidence of additional research expenditures below.

The COL participates in various sponsored projects that are not captured in the HERD survey data on research expenditures. The COL's scholarly activities are generally categorized as "other sponsored activities," and most fit into the sponsored service classification and therefore do not show up here as "research expenditures". In FY 22, the COL had expenditures totaling \$1,181,148, as reported in the Sponsored Expenditure Files which are housed on the University's Financial Projects and Compliance site and can be found here: <https://financialservices.wvu.edu/sponsored-research-accounting/grants-accounting/sponsored-expenditure-files> These expenses include \$620,952 in federal funding, \$544,229 in private funding, and \$15,967 in state funding. This funding supports our law clinics and our faculty. The Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic is primarily funded by sponsored awards. This Clinic was featured on WVU Today this year and the linked article provides a nice overview of the work being done: <https://wvutoday.wvu.edu/stories/2023/02/15/working-in-service-wvu-land-use-attorneys-address-fundamental-needs-of-west-virginia-communities> Members of the COL faculty regularly collaborate with other units on campus to support externally funded research projects. Law, ethics, and policy expertise are critical to federal grant programs, especially in medicine and science. Our subject-matter experts in those fields have helped other units at WVU to obtain grants. The COL currently has collaborations with the Health Affairs Institute, Davis College, Statler College, and the Institute of Sustainability and Energy Research. Additionally, our faculty serve as the University's research integrity officer, integral to WVU's compliance with federal and state rules and regulations to receive funding.

Q4.6. Upload evidence of research expenditures here.

Q5.1.
Student Enrollment and Graduation History

Responses in this section are limited to 7500 characters (approximately 1.5 single spaced pages). Responses should be concise but also specific and supported by evidence.

Specific data definitions for these metrics are available on the [Academic Transformation](#) webpage.

Q5.2. Data have been provided on all of the unit's program's student enrollment trends.

That data includes:

4-year median fall enrollment (fall 18 through fall 21);
Fall 2022 change from 4-year median (in headcount and in percentage).

Units should address any programs with enrollment below the median for the program level or which has experienced a negative change in enrollment.

The COL's J.D. program is our only academic program at present. The question about programs below the median program level is not applicable. The enrollment data in the program review spreadsheet indicate a decline of 10.5 students and 3% between the median enrollment for 2018-2021 and fall 2022. The 10.5 student gap stems from the difference between the size of the entering 1L class in fall 2022 (103) and the median entering class sizes for fall 2018-21 (113.5 using ABA enrollment data). (In contrast, 2L enrollment in 2022 was 0.5 students higher than the 2018-21 2L enrollment median, while 3L enrollment in 2022 was 1 student lower than the 2L enrollment median. Essentially, the upper-level enrollment is flat for the specified time period.) The decline in 1L class size in Fall 2022 (which obviously will affect 2L and 3L class sizes going forward) reflects a deliberate policy choice, not a change in demand for legal education at WVU. In fact, the number of applications we receive has increased from 441 (2020) to 581 (2022) over the past three years. Like all law schools, we want to maintain or improve the quality of our incoming classes because better qualified students are more likely to be successful in law school (with consequences for our accreditation and licensure) and because median LSAT score is an important metric in law school rankings and a proxy for quality to both applicants and peers. For Fall 2022, we accepted a somewhat smaller entering class of 103 to raise our entering class LSAT median from 154 to 155, our 75th percentile LSAT from 157 to 158, and our diversity percentage of that class from 8% to over 12%. Had we chosen instead to keep our median LSAT of 154 or 153 – as for every other entering class since at least 2007 – there would have been no drop in first-year enrollment in Fall 2022. Our challenge is not maintaining enrollment at 2018-21 levels or even modestly increasing enrollment from those levels. We could enroll students of lower quality who will use loan debt to pay our tuition. The real challenge is the interconnected one of *maintaining or growing student enrollment* and *maintaining or increasing the academic quality and diversity of the student body* and *reducing scholarship spending/discounting and/or replacing awards from state funds with privately funded ones*. Our plans for addressing this challenge have already been sketched in the answer to Question 3.4 (net financial position).

Q5.3. Data have been provided on the unit's three-year trend in student credit hour (SCH) production.

Units should address any programs with a negative trend in SCH production.

As explained in our answer to the previous question, student credit hour trends at the COL are a direct function of enrollment trends, which we describe fully above.

Q6.1.
Assessment of Learning and Program Improvement

The Provost's Office will review the self-studies from the most recent Board of Governor's five-year program reviews for this section.

Units may provide updated information below if they so choose.

Q6.2. Provide the unit's plans or ideas to make significant changes to its operations, structure, offerings, or personnel in order to reduce its costs or improve its efficiency.

Provide any significant changes to the department's program curricula, its assessment of learning practices, or any other improvements that have been made since the department's programs completed their most recent Board of Governor's five-year review.

The BOG five-year review for the COL was just completed this year. This response summarizes the information provided in that review and explains how the COL will pursue improvements in these areas and in the context of the program review/self-study. The COL will engage in a thoughtful review of all aspects of our program's curriculum, including meaningful and data-driven assessment of our learning outcomes and overall student success, to meet the demands of modern practice and upcoming changes in licensure requirements. This process will be organized around a one-year, three-year, and five-year plan to provide both short and long-term goals to improve the overall quality of our program of legal education, to ensure accreditation by the ABA in our upcoming site visit in 2026, and to address personnel levels to increase the unit's instructional and operational efficiency. As noted in the January 2023 BOG report, the COL made two recent changes to its curriculum: one to its academic standards and another to its first-year curriculum. These programmatic changes were prompted by several factors, including a decline in bar exam passage rates, updated accreditation requirements, and the need for more academic support and remediation in several areas for incoming students. First, the COL raised its required GPA for students to remain in academic good standing from a 2.3 to 2.5 because our historical data shows that students who previously graduated with GPAs lower than 2.5 almost never passed the bar exam. Students may now also be placed on academic probation sooner to expedite academic support intervention. Second, the College decreased the number of credits in the first-year curriculum from 32 to 30, which put the College more in line with its peer schools. Given the need for more writing instruction, we added one credit to the first-year writing program. We also added a one-credit Professionalism class to introduce instruction on various aspects of professional identity, cultural competence, mental health, and wellness. Several substantive courses were consolidated or moved to the upper-level curriculum to make room for those additions. The Academic Planning Committee and the whole faculty are working to objectively review and assess our curriculum and graduation requirements. Our curriculum must fit the demands of modern law practice and align with the evolving needs and challenges of the state, region, and nation. Our curriculum must respond to the declining number of faculty due to attrition and retirements. And our curriculum must respond to the evolving needs and challenging of our students. Many faculty positions were not filled as the COL downsized its faculty in response to reduced enrollments after 2016. When we have hired, we have prioritized core curricular needs. Further, the COL is closely monitoring the content and requirements for the NextGen bar exam (slated to be implemented in 2026), which will replace the current form of the bar exam. Additional skills and practical application of substantive law will be the focus of this new exam format. Students will require additional academic support, curricular opportunities, and meaningful assessment of their doctrinal knowledge, legal reasoning, analysis, research, and writing skills. We will continue to review our substantive and experiential offerings to provide a respected and accredited program of legal education that accounts for the following: preparing our students for obtaining their license to practice law and serving their clients well, gaining efficiencies in utilizing our faculty expertise, pursuing other non-J.D. programs (such as the MLS), and meeting the needs of the state in furthering the land-grant mission. With respect to assessment of learning outcomes, the COL has been diligently working on a comprehensive assessment plan that had previously stalled at various points. The COL's Assessment Committee defined comprehensive performance criteria for each learning objective, created a timeline for assessing the objectives and criteria, completed a revised and comprehensive curricular map, and surveyed the faculty to gather artifacts and begin assessment in each area. This spring, we began our assessment process, as detailed in our timeline, with Learning Outcome 1, which covers our students thoroughly learning substantive and procedural law. We are now confident that a preliminary assessment of all of our learning outcomes will be complete prior to the ABA's next site visit in AY 2025-2026. To build on the momentum from Spring 2023, the Assessment Committee will be merged into the Academic Planning Committee for 2023-2024. Assessment is meant to inform and drive curriculum, so it makes sense to integrate the two. The COL will move quickly and decisively as we undertake the next phase of our curricular assessment and plans for program improvement through the lens of student success, market demands, and efficient utilization of our faculty expertise and institutional strengths. In light of the program review/self study and need for increased efficiency and utilization of resources, this process will require difficult choices and increased collaboration to prioritize short-term and long-term goals to maximize student success as the COL focuses on its most impactful courses, areas of emphasis, and experiential programs. The COL will meet these challenges given the critical role it plays in serving the state and the land-grant mission of WVU.

Q6.3. The program may provide additional evidence of program improvement here.

Q7.1. The unit may provide any additional context or information about the unit's programs here.

In preparing this self-study, we obtained aggregate reported data from the ABA for all accredited law schools to examine metrics in total. We also accessed the full dataset compiled by the U.S. News and World Report f (available online through subscription). We are attaching our working file for peer data comparisons utilized in this study.

Q7.2. You may use this section to provide any additional evidence referenced in the program review.

[COL Peer Comparisons from ABA Aggregate Data.xlsx](#)

42KB

application/vnd.openxmlformats-officedocument.spreadsheetml.sheet

Q7.3. You may use this section to provide any additional evidence referenced in the program review.

Q7.4. You may use this section to provide any additional evidence referenced in the program review.

Q8.1.

Thank you for completing your self-study for the West Virginia University Board of Governors program review. You may now submit the survey and your self-study will be passed on to the Provost's Office for review.

Location Data

Location: [REDACTED]

Source: GeolIP Estimation

